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The Situational Analysis of the Language Needs at the BP language Center in Basra, Iraq.

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The situational analysis of the language needs at the
BP language center in Basra, Iraq.

by

Lana Al Mudhaffar

A thesis submitted to the graduate faculty
In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
MASTER OF ARTS

Major: Teaching English as a Second Language/Applied Linguistics
(English for Specific Purposes)

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ABSTRACT

In 2003 Iraq faced a variety of abrupt sociocultural changes following the advent of war and the end of the Sadaam Hussein regime. The subsequent ten years of reconstruction brought about new needs and demands for Iraq and its population. These challenges came to light with Iraq's sudden thrust into a global environment, where English is becoming increasingly important. This study examines the evolving language needs of Rumaila Operation Organization (ROO) employees based in Basra. Specifically, the need for course work that will improve English language skills and enhance performance in the work place is critical. Due to the prior restrictive political environment of Sadaam Hussein and the security risks of the last ten years of a post-conflict environment, not much research has been undertaken regarding the importance of business English in Iraq. Therefore, a critical need exists to research the teaching of English in Iraq to identify education solutions useful in the short run. This needs analysis utilizes surveys and informal interviews with three different groups of stakeholders: employees/students, teachers, and administrators of ROO. This study sits within the context of a license contract between three major oil companies: South Oil Company (SOC), British Petroleum (BP), and China National Petroleum Corporation (CNPC). The results demonstrate a critical need for the conversational skills of the students, allowing them to gain the confidence necessary to engage in both formal and informal business discussions, and in improving their effectiveness in collaborative decision-making in this business environment. This research will allow interested stakeholders in Iraq to consider the needs of the employees/students and TESL professionals that are specific to this unique environment and its distinct type of work.

Key words: Needs analysis, ESP, Business English

CHAPTER 1 – INTRODUCTION

Introduction

This situational analysis of the BP English courses at the ROO compound is presented in five chapters. The first chapter focuses on four historical stages of the development of the Iraqi oil company. Chapter two is the literature review, chapter three is the methodology, chapter four shows the results and discussion of the research analysis, and finally chapter five presents the conclusion.

Oil is the cause of many dilemmas in the world today. In Iraq, this is clearly the case. Iraq has endured years of isolation, war and scandals that were provoked because of its significant geographic location and its oil reserves, which are claimed to be the largest in the world. From 1972, the date of Iraq's oil nationalization, to 2003, the date of the US led invasion of Iraq, there were no outside investments in Iraq's oil fields or agreements with international oil companies. However, today Iraq is rebuilding its oil industry, which is seen as a gateway for major international oil companies to invest business for future oil development in Iraq. Williams (2009) comments that "companies seem to have calculated that it is worth their while to accept deals with limited profit opportunities now, in order to cash in on more lucrative development deals in the future" (para, 2). Indications of the importance of the South Oil Company (SOC) are its auctioning agreements of major oil fields that are located in the south of Iraq. Iraq expert Reidar Visser, a research fellow at the Norwegian Institution of International Affairs, stated in an article published in the New York Times "in terms of size and potential, the Basra region remains one of the most attractive areas of future growth for the international oil industry" (Williams, 2009, para. 3).

The historical background for this study includes five stages. Stage one will explain how this company was formed and its main branches which will lead into a more focused explanation of the South Oil Company (SOC). Stage two will give an explanation of the time period between 1990-2002, framing the oil industry in Iraq around that time and referring to one example that reflects the working situation within that period. Stage three focuses on 2003-2012, highlighting the rapid transition of events that happened in Iraq and how this affected the company both negatively and positively. These three stages will serve as the blueprint that will frame the problem examined in this research. Stage four presents the core of the research by identifying a major problem that this company is facing today, the language barrier. It will explain how this problem is escalating and why educators should give attention to this part of the world today in order to develop a well-established business environment. Finally, stage five shows the importance of globalization and how it is linked to this situational analysis.

Stage I: Ministry of Oil in Iraq

It is crucial to provide the setting for this research in order to understand the need for and importance of this situational analysis. It is equally important to understand the historical background of Iraq's national oil company. Surprising as it may seem, most people think that Iraq has more than one oil company, but there is actually only one oil company, which is owned by the government and dominates Iraq's oil production.

The Ministry of Oil (MOO) and the State Oil Marketing Organization (SOMO) control this industry. Both MOO and SOMO are located in Baghdad, the capital of Iraq. MOO has two main branches that feed the Ministry with oil production. The first is in

Kurkuk, North Iraq. The second is centered in Basra in the south of Iraq. Each of the locations has scattered compounds and large numbers of employees. Some compounds are refinery stations where projects take place, such as drilling mines, producing crude oil and constructing pipelines; this is where most engineers and workers are located. However, there are sites that deal with human resources, training departments, finance departments, and everything that deals with paperwork. This is not much different than any other oil company in the world. But our main issue is not in the buildings or the refineries, as this research will explain.

The South Oil Company (SOC), one of the two main branches of MOO, oversees many oil fields. The most important on the level of production and reserved oil are Majnoon and Rumaila. Emphasis will be given to Rumaila refinery as this is where the case study will be located. In fact, the Rumaila Oil field is one of the most productive oil fields in Iraq.

Stage II: 1990-2002

1990-2002 could be labeled as the sanctions period and is within the timeline of Saddam Hussein's rule over Iraq. This period took Iraq back 20 years in many levels of life, socially, financially, economically, and educationally. The sanctions period is mostly described as a paralyzed, static, and isolated chapter in this country's history. This being the situation, the oil industry could not be described as flourishing. But it could be identified as a controlled stage regarding Iraq's delicate political situation. Calling it controlled means that it was not flexible, international relations with other companies were limited, reflecting badly on the business environment. Examples of limitations such

as less interaction with international staff and few opportunities for travel or training employees, affected the employees' ability to perform on the same level as the global oil industry.

No doubt, the absence of equipment, resources, and training opportunities all contributed to the company's declining opportunity to work with other major oil companies. Employee performance declined and refineries were not maintained. These are examples of the obstacles of this particular period of the company's history. The only solution was to work with the basics that were available to keep the company afloat, as was the case with life in general at that time. So by making do with what was available at that time, the company was working with strategies dating from 1972.

A good example of this stage is the purchasing department where I worked for more than seven years. The SOC purchasing department specialized in finalizing SOC's purchases such as drilling equipment, pipes, and turbines. The purchasing department handled the tenders, contracts, corresponding faxes, and shipping arrangements. All these stages were prepared and produced using paperwork and faxes during this period. Although the majority of employees in this department were graduates of the English department, the truth is all the faxes were fixed, meaning they were printed out forms, so there was no production or use of the English language, so the English skills of the employees were peripheral. For second language learning, there must be practice to maintain and develop language. So there was little surprise at the lack of English the employees had by 2003.

The purchasing department was one example of how the gap or lack in maintaining a second language in this oil company occurred. Following regime change in

2003, oil company employees were unprepared to face the English language demands thrust upon them following decades of isolation under Saddam Hussein and the UN sanctions.

Stage III: 2003-2012

The rapid changes after 2003 also began to change the MOO's direction towards future decisions. There were two major developments within the company that will be highlighted in this period. The first development was the training teachers program; the second was the advent of license agreements. Both these developments addressed a lack in the company's readiness to compete, which brings us a step closer to the research problem. These developments will be explained by identifying the need that brought these developments into practice and the results of these decisions.

Training Teachers Program

The training department at the SOC is responsible for developing employee skills. One of its main concerns is teaching English courses. But the type of courses taught till 2006 were not effective for the level of requirements the company was moving towards. The type of courses delivered relied on old methods of teaching English, meaning they only concentrated on grammar rules. For example, participants would memorize grammar rules to help construct sentences, as this method was considered the most effective, but no interaction would occur in these types of courses. On the other hand, as the company was shifting its attention to collaborating with other oil companies, this established the need for re-inventing the English courses to motivate the employees, raising the number of participants attendance for such courses, and enhancing the

employees ability to communicate in English. The solution for this increasing need came after intense meetings and negotiations, which approved the training teachers program that was certified by Baghdad's head training departments at the MOO. The solution aimed to train these employees to become teachers who would then use new teaching methods back in the oil company.

In 2006, the first selected group of employees were sent to Great Britain for the training teachers program. They attended four weeks of ESL training at International Bell School in Cambridge, then an additional three weeks at the British Council in Amman. The additional three-week course enabled the teachers to implement their lesson plans in an actual ESL class. They were observed, instructed and given feedback after each lesson they presented. This intensive training course promoted the program for future ESL teachers at this company. The Bell School program consisted of teaching basic communicative techniques and activities, such as group games, designing a lesson plan, researching for new ideas, using films/songs, and most importantly highlighting that communicative teaching most not be teacher centered, but allowing the students to take a larger role in class. This type of teaching was very new for all the trainers, as the company in the past relied basically on old methods of center teacher classroom and was mostly lectures of grammar use and short dialogues

The first two requirements for an employee in this program were at least 3 years of experience at the company and a BA degree in English. This qualified the employee to enter an English exam at the MOO in Baghdad. If they passed the exam the program committee interviewed the employee. The main reason for the English interview was to test the employee's ability to respond and communicate well in spoken English.

Gradually, the program gained the support of many employees that were eager to attend these courses. The cause of this increasing attention was the use of new methods, or what was considered to be new for this company in teaching English. The need for communicative skills in English motivated the employees to sign up for these courses. The teachers came back with fresh ideas and a new attitude towards the teaching English. Significantly, between 2006-2008 the training program was well known by most of the employees and there were meetings on the administration level about how they could keep up the teachers' performance and develop the program. So it was suggested that they send the first group of teachers again for more developed courses.

The success of the first group led to sending another group of teachers and expanding the courses to three locations. The SOC oil company was enlarging its number of employees so that all the employees would have the benefit to attend these courses. This only happened with the SOC branch and not all the MOO.

Historical Context: License Agreements

In 2009, signed agreements between the SOC and other major oil companies were discussed. These agreements were named license contract agreements. These agreements opened the way for developing language courses which helped bridge the gap between the international staff and national staff in language ability. Figure 2 shows how these agreements worked, as the arrows on both sides of the diagram signaled the transfer of local Iraqi employees from the governmental oil company to the BP Company. One of the main conditions of these contracts was that the local employees working for the Iraqi government at the oil companies would have a chance to transfer to the international companies under a 20-year work contract.

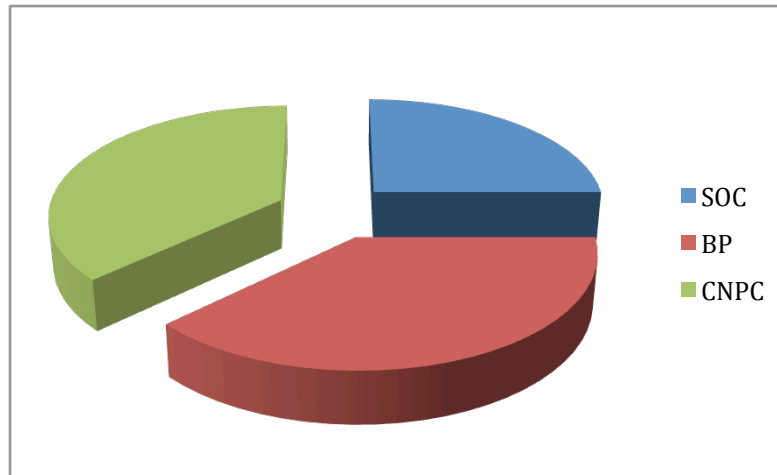


Figure 1. *Percentages of each of the three companies' shares in the license contract agreement.*

The SOC and SOMO awarded British Petroleum (BP) and China National Petroleum Corporation (CNPC) a 20-year license contract agreement. Each company has a percentage share as is shown in Figure 1. The signed contract was to develop and rehabilitate the Rumaila oil field to increase production rates; the project is entitled Rumaila Operating Organization (ROO). The success of the cooperative agreement necessitated sufficient English language abilities for employees in all three companies.

Between 2009 and 2012, massive changes have been implemented due to the license contract. The change examined in this study is language and how worldwide oil companies improve employee language and work performance, considering that this particular part of the world is much different than other branches of BP. Basra is still not considered safe territory for international staff and this could affect the progress of development on various levels.

The historical background has been presented of MOO in general and SOC in a more specific manner, as readers might question the shift from the SOC to BP regarding this situational need analysis research. Also, another question might be why this case study is not based on the SOC teachers and employees/students at SOC? The answer to these questions is that SOC would have more complications of sharing information and approvals on the governmental level, which would take too much time to handle. Therefore, when presenting my proposal to BP, they were more than glad to support the study and saw no problems or complications.

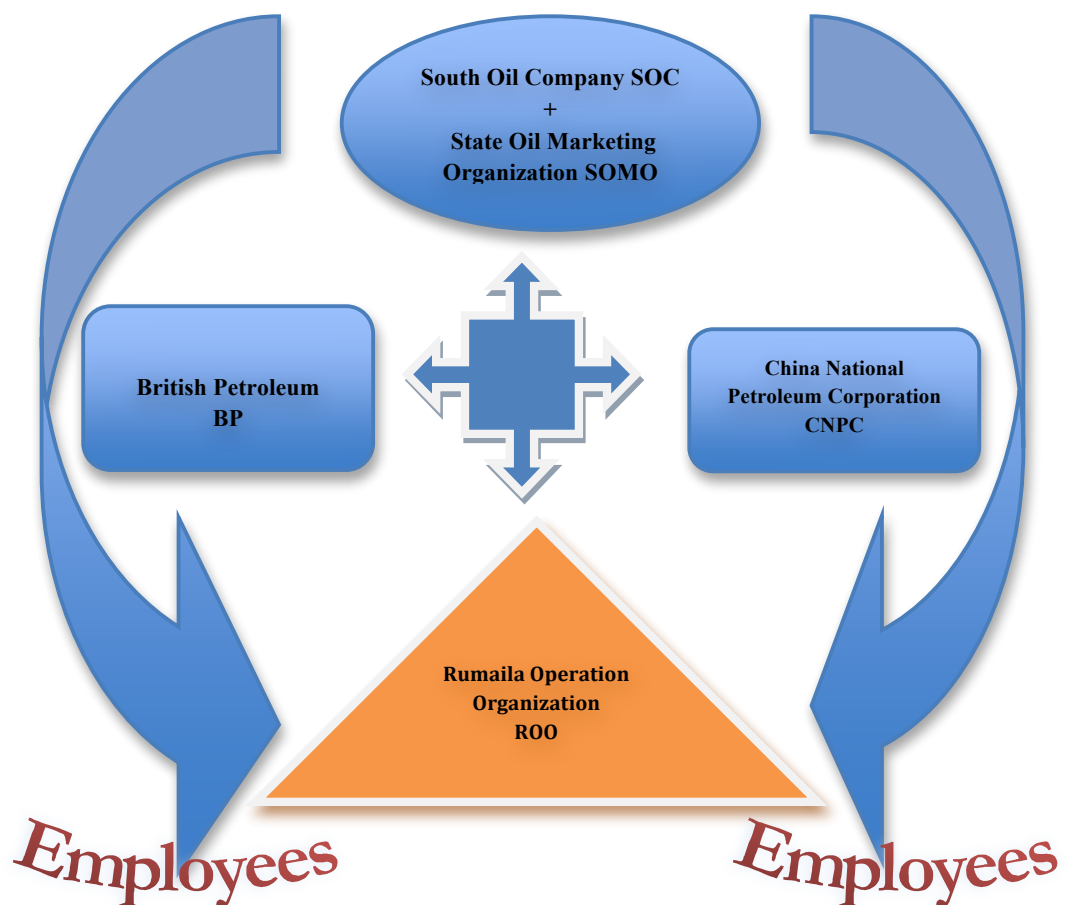


Figure 2. License contract agreement diagram, showing the transfer of local Iraqi employees to BP.

In summary, the two main outcomes of this stage are the training teachers program and the license contract between the Iraqi oil company and other International oil companies. Both these issues contributed to the need of English courses for the local Iraqi employee.

Stage IV: Identifying problem

This section will identify problems that arose from the first three stages. The problems will be addressed in two parts. Part one will identify the situation at the SOC before 2003. Part two will explain the shift of changes after 2003 and the importance of the English language with the increasing need in this particular business environment.

Before 2003

English courses at the SOC before 2003 were not popular. Practical communicative teaching was not considered a method of teaching a second language. Thus, most of the courses focused on grammar rules and most participants would have memorized these rules to help them construct sentences, as this method was considered the most effective although no actual production or interaction would happen in these type of courses. Few employees were interested in attending these courses, because they were a repetition of what was taught at their high school or undergraduate college studies. There was no new material and no actual training of spoken English, which was not considered a problem at that period of time. However, this situation changed dramatically after 2003.

After 2003

The rapid changes after 2003 forced Iraq's oil industry to change its English training courses with greater emphasis on speech and fluency. The rates of employees attending English conversation courses at SOC increased throughout 2004-2012, reflecting the importance of obtaining functional language skills. There are many reasons for this increase, one of which would be gaining better opportunities for future positions. The better English and fluency an employee has, the greater the chances for an important title and position, and the larger the paycheck at the end of the month. Interestingly, the contract license with international companies motivated some employees to be more competitive at their jobs because they envisioned that the contracts could allow them to gain better opportunities, learn new business skills, and have ways out of the routine job they had had for years.

The need for English increased each year as business expanded and SOC was making more international agreements with foreign companies. My perspective on this situation came as a result of my personal opportunity to observe the language barrier while I was teaching for 2 years at the SOC. I saw that general English courses could be a solution for the beginner levels; however, there needed to be more attention towards business English courses for the higher levels. The idea of addressing the employees as students of English and giving general English courses could be a partial solution. But in the long run, there had to be specific business English courses. Also, after the courses were over, there had to be ways for those who wanted to further develop their English to find assistance or programs that they could use for practice. These issues still remain as sticking points that highlight the problems these courses are producing.

The approach to English learning has developed greatly since 2003 because of the various changes that came upon this part of the world. There is still a great need, however, to achieve better solutions through well-adapted courses that fit in to the needs of these employees.

Research Questions

There are three research questions motivating this needs analysis.

- 1) Are the courses meeting the employees students' needs? What are the learners needs?
- 2) What are the administration's obstacles and challenges in this particular situation?
- 3) Are the teachers' needs being addressed? What are these needs?

The first part of question one for this research highlights the English courses and questions if the courses are meeting the expectations of the students. The answers to the first question are provided by the questionnaire. In addition, the interview questions present a sample of the points of view these employees would want to deliver. The second part of research question one addresses the specific requirements and needs of the students. The responses are collected from the students, teachers, and the administration, as each group identifies the needs of the students from their own perspective.

The second question focuses on the administration, drawing upon the obstacles that initiate in this certain situation. The answers for this question will depend on the interview with the main manger of the English program at ROO. Finally, the last question

addresses the teacher and their needs to operate in this particular environment. Most of the teachers needs are drawn from the interviews.

Summary

The primary purpose of this research is to investigate the needs of ROO employees at BP in regard to their business English skills. The important turning point for these employees' language needs was the 2009 signed license agreements between SOC and both BP and CNPC.

The study shows how the isolation of the country influenced its language training and how its forced entry into the global world dramatically affected the business environment in Iraq. The battle to overcome the language weaknesses of these employees is a daily struggle. The difficulties of Iraqis in a modern global environment can be divided into two parts. The first part shows an example of some of these enduring difficulties that Iraqi workers have faced throughout the past 20 years; the isolation from the first Gulf War, decades of UN sanctions, and the difficulty of traveling abroad for Iraqi citizens. However, what affected the educational development system is the loss of scholars, researchers, and academics fleeing Iraq. This is a brief highlight of events that contribute to flowing problems and difficulties that are in need of detailed investigation. The second difficulty in researching issues in post-conflict Iraq is security and could be the reasons for lack of research addressing the needs of modern day Iraqi businesses.

This research is attempting to emphasize the importance of English language to helping in the reconstruction of Iraq by empowering citizens and employees with the skills necessary to exist within 21st century Iraq. The thesis layout emphasizes my own

perspective as an Iraqi citizen who has observed and encountered the difficulties of this business environment from an insider point of view and not as an outsider/ In this case I represent the local Iraqi employees, from both an employees and teacher perspective. The results of the data collection are listed as recommendations for further courses in the conclusion chapter which is basically drawn from or based upon the literature review.

CHAPTER 2 – LITERATURE REVIEW

Literature Review

The Concept of Need Analysis (NA)

This section will describe the historical background of needs analysis (NA). The importance of NA in English for Specific Purposes (ESP) cannot be understated. To justify language teaching for specific purposes assumes a clear specification of the needs that need to be met by a specialized course of study. In the 1970's, NA became an essential part of ESP, as it was initially approached by "the initial process for the specification of behavioral objectives" (Le Ha, 2005, para. 3) which proceeded into investigating needs from a more functional, notional, and lexical approach towards syllabus design. The key use of NA was Munby's (1978) communicative syllabus design which opened the path to research on learners' needs as related to various functional teaching approaches. Needs analyses allowed learning the language from a learner's point of view and asked questions about the context in which language would be used. Studies examining the specific language needs for medicine, the military, business, etc. contributed to understanding how English language teaching could be made more effective for specific contexts and groups of learners. Because learners within a specific field of work are required to know the jargon of their specialization, the use of NA helps direct time and effort to serve both students and the work environment they belong to. Munby's (1978) approach to need analysis took into consideration discourse analysis, communicative approaches to language teaching, and sociolinguistics in course development (p. 3). His model is classified into two stages: the Communication Needs Processor (CNP), which depends on eight variables of purposive domain, setting,

interaction, instrumentality, dialect, target level, communicative event, and communicative key; as well as an interpretation of the needs profile that is derived from the CNP, explaining the alternatives related to syllabus content, micro-skills, micro functions, and linguistic forms. The approach to language teaching should thus be appropriate to the syllabus. Hyland's (2006) perspective of the needs analysis is that "needs is actually an umbrella term that embraces many aspects incorporating learners' goals and backgrounds, language proficiencies, their reasons for taking the course, their teaching and learning preferences, and the situation they will need to communicate in" (p. 73).

English for Specific Purposes (ESP)

ESP is a meta-category which includes many types of specific purposes, such as English for Academic Purposes (EAP), English for General Business Purposes (EGBP), and English for Specific Business Purposes (ESBP). The purpose of the needs analysis in any ESP situation is training learners in the use of professional language that will serve them adequately in their working environment (Basturkmen, 2006, p. 17). This study focuses on the English for General Business Purposes (EGBP) and English for Specific Business Purposes (ESBP) fields. Dudley-Evans and St. John (1998) present a descriptive view of both the General and Specific business courses that are particularly relevant for this study.

Johns & Dudley-Evans (1991) emphasize the international scope of ESP covering 30 years, distinguishing ESP from general English. They argued that "students are enrolled in ESL or EFL classes for particular reasons and that the student's target English

situations have identifiable elements; thus, it is the responsibility of teachers to discover these factors and to deliver courses that are suitable for their students populations” (p. 299). They discuss ESP from an international scope, explaining the necessity of communicative English for a majority of fields, for example, pilots and air control personnel, that need to communicate in English and also referring to events in international business where English is more appropriate to use for communication.

EGBP is “the focus is presentation, through listening and/or reading, followed by exercise to practice grammar and vocabulary. These focus on accuracy and have correct answers. Finally, there are activities which are more open-ended and develop fluency in one or more of the four skills” (Dudley-Evans & St. John, p. 56). On the other hand, English for Specific Business Purposes (ESBP) courses are run for “job-experienced learners who bring business knowledge and skills to the language-learning situation” (p. 56). Both these descriptions are relevant to the BP ROO English training program. The EGBP is best seen as the model for the less experienced employees that do not have years of business experience while ESBP is better seen as relevant to employees with over 10 years of experience but lacking sufficient English language skills.

Throughout the past two decades much attention has been given to ESP from a western perspective. However, less attention has been given to ESP and NA throughout the Middle East as English courses and teaching English as a second language have been designed without consideration of the learners’ requirements (Kandil, 2008). But within the past few years there has been some shift towards NA, coming as a result of changes that have occurred throughout the Middle East, especially the developmental changes in the business world and more specifically the oil industry, which brought about greater

needs for effective English language training. With the political changes in Iraq dating from 2003, Iraq has found itself taking large strides to make up for the years that are lost. One result is that NA is becoming more important for English course development in Iraq.

The theoretical background for this research uses studies that have examined NA, ESP, EGBP, and ESBP in the past two decades. However, this study will not develop or design a course for the employees; its main purpose is to compare what the employees seek to learn to what the teachers and administration believe these needs are.

Insider/Outsider Perspective

The insider/outsider perspective has been discussed in various need analysis case studies; the most discussed aspect is which of these perspectives gives a broader view on what the learner needs actually are. The following articles tackle their research from two different perspectives. This first article is by Holliday (1995) presenting him as the outsider. The second article by Jasso-Aguilar (1999) tackles the insider perspective. Also this shows the perspective of the ROO research study.

Holliday (1995) is the key study influencing this research as it resembles the context in which ROO operates. Holliday conducted a needs analysis for an unnamed oil company in the Middle East. His survey's goals were decided for him as he claims, "when I arrived, it had already been decided by the company training department that the investigation would take a form of interviews with management, a sample of supervisors and a sample of national employees. I had no opposition to this decision" (p. 117). He also explains the role of English and its importance in the oil industry in this way:

English is the major language of oil technology, and was therefore essential for efficient communication within the company between national and expatriate staff. This was particularly important because the company was a joint-venture between the state-owned national oil company and a major international organization. The expatriate staff was multi-national, and although few of them had English as a native language, English was the accepted lingua franca of the work place (p. 118).

Holliday (1995) highlights the problems of the “Middle East Oil Company” in terms of the most common and problematic issues of English language communication. Explaining problematic situations that occur in such an environment by showing examples that highlight the lack in communication and the dangerous result of this breakdown in communication, he argues that when “a national engineer is responsible for a drilling location, a crisis occurs. The engineer needs to telephone for assistance, but is unable to explain precisely and quickly what has to be done. The outcome may be disastrous” (p. 120).

However, Holliday’s article did not carry out a NA or describe a course design. It could rather be labeled as a list of recommendations, which were set according to the background information of this company. The ROO is similar to Holliday’s case on the level of recommendations and not presenting any course design. However, it differs in the sense the ROO situational analysis reflects an insider’s perspective, while Holliday’s analysis is considered an outsider perspective. Jasso-Aguilar (1999) is focused on Waikiki Hotel Maids and their daily tasks. As a result, Jasso-Aguilar aims at a broader

view of English language needs, in the sense that she is expanding the practice of language to serve these maids on a higher level than just merely “cheap labor” (p. 33), by proposing the idea of NA exceeding the work place.

The concept of the insider for this particular research is looked upon from my own perspective as a native Iraqi that has had the opportunity to encounter and observe this business environment first hand. Insiders are recommended for such business environments as they have a broader view of the company and its needs, especially when engaged in the business process itself. As such, they do not take into consideration only the stakeholder or administration needs to achieve their business prospects.

Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)

CLT is known for student centered activities, allowing the students themselves to be empowered to communicate in the second language. Examples of CLT activities are role play, interviews, and information gap. Celce-Murcia (2001) highlights four hypothetical components of CLT. These components consist of “grammatical competence, discourse competence, sociocultural competence, and strategic competence” (p. 17), explaining that these competences expand and develop with practice. Richards (1985) argues that teacher-learner (i.e., teacher-centered) classes lack conversational skills the learners need. He explains the down fall for the teacher-learner class, stating that they prevent learners from negotiating, collaborating, clarifying, introducing topics, and changing topics. Although teacher-learner classes do allow learners to interact, the interactions are mostly short utterances rather than long authentic conversations that

would be more realistic to real life conversations. Business environments have a great need for this type of classes, addressing the communicative skill at a more realistic level.

Technology and Teaching English

More recent needs analyses have had to take technology into account. Salminen (1996) explains how new trends of technology have replaced business letters and how faxes and e-mails had swiftly taken place of business letters. Kern (2006) argues how technology and online learning has developed from using Communicative Assistance for Language Learning CALL for tutorials, to using online dictionaries, animated classrooms online, data base, website courses and corpus based courses. He also explains that to teach language and culture relies on how to combine technology with teaching language. The success of this type of teaching depends on the pedagogy and the teachers' ability to organize these lessons. Teachers must be able to research new ways of structuring tasks, guiding, monitoring, and evaluating, and most importantly, must involve the teacher's ability to master computer applications.

Although technology has taken on an important role in language teaching in recent years, the main concern of EGBP and ESBP has been whether technology can help improve language skills. However, it is still uncertain for situations such as the ROO, where there are still struggles to maintain simple classrooms and equipment. Clearly, BP needs to assess their employees with updated information of corresponding e-mails, presentations and how to combine both language and technology to enhance business performance. Unfortunately, technology could remain a gap of communication towards

learning both EGBP and ESBP depending on the student's level and teacher's ability to conduct such classes.

Some Needs Analysis Studies

This study uses multiple sources of data to arrive at its recommendations. Cowling (2007) gives an example of NA and course design for a Japanese business company by the use of a "multiple-triangulation" course based methodology (p. 428). Other recent studies have also given attention to multiple sources of data, emphasizing different aspects and skills that serve the ESP situation. The idea of collaborating as shown in Bremner (2010) says that "often workplace collaborators will have a wider selection of channels available to them, such as video conferencing and collaborative software packages, so it may be that not all of these are fully used, however, and many students are now able to call upon an increasingly sophisticated range of tools to communicate" (p. 124). As highlighted by Holliday (1995), Cowling (2007), and Bremner (2010), the use of triangulation to collect NA data from various perspectives of the work environment provides richer input for a case study.

Johns (1996) identified the special needs of ESBP and EGBP. However, Flowerdew (2010) argued that distinctive changes have come to teaching business discourse by taking account of context, organization, and cultural forms, thus not depending entirely on the text-based forms of teaching. In addition, recent studies have shown developmental progress and collaboration of research and pedagogy (Chan, 2009;

Esteban & Canado, 2004) with case studies from Malaysia, Hong Kong, India, Costa Rica, Korea and the Philippines displaying various approaches to NA.

Kassim and Ali (2010) surveyed stakeholders including ESL experts and faculties of engineering regarding the use of English language at 10 multinational companies in Malaysia. The case study reflected the importance of model and course syllabus design that should meet the requirements of the workplace after the graduation of university graduates. The researchers show that the state of 45,000 unemployed Malaysian university graduates was related primarily to their poor communication skills in English. Although the graduates were highly qualified, companies were hesitant to employ them because of the professional need for employees to have good professional English skills. Their recommendations “emphasized the need for a comprehensive needs analysis and collaboration with content specialists in order to avoid or minimize the mismatch between the requirements of facilities and the ESP courses offered” (p. 170).

Kandil (2008) presents a similar argument addressing Arab learners and the importance of NA for Arab learners of the high school level. The argument sheds light on a point that most Arab governmental educational institutions face, which Medgyes (1986) calls teaching TENO (Teaching English for No Obvious Reason) (as cited in Kandil, 2008)

Lockwood (2012) investigates a different type of business environment, that of call centers located in India, Costa Rica, and the Philippines. Emphasizing the development of an ESP syllabus design drawn from the need analysis, the study examines the views of both stakeholders and the students in these programs. The assessment indicated that the breakdowns in communication came as a result of limited choices of

lexico-grammar, lack of cultural awareness, and inability to control the dynamics of the call. Chan (2009) drew upon a number of theories to bridge the gap between theoretical claims of research and practical pedagogy of business English by developing two types of check lists to enhance development and material use with evaluation and research. Brieger highlights four main forms of any business English course by classifying the types into “general language knowledge,” “specific language knowledge,” “general communication skills,” and “professional communication skills” (as cited in Chan, 2009, p. 128)

Sorin (2006) did a NA for a Korean business to enhance general English communicative skills which targeted learners that intended to work in the US or in their country within a business English environment. The findings of this research highlighted 26 business tasks that were essential, and the interviews and questionnaire helped to define these tasks and their frequency. This case study identified two levels for the developed task-based course since one level could not address all employee needs for English.

Forey (2004), focused on business reading skills by comparing views of how 15 EFL teachers and 12 business employees interpreted and analyzed two business memos that contained the same message but were delivered in two different forms. The methodological approach focused on social and text analysis by the use of interviews and focus groups for the data collection. This research highlighted the importance of writing context and its interpretations in work place environment. The findings showed the various interpretations of the memos used for this research by the teachers and business employees. This emphasized the interpersonal interpretations that occur in business

environments, which could be used for the ROO case study to improve writing skills in workplace.

Language Barriers

After 2003, Iraq changed in many ways. The isolation of Iraq from any modernized information of what was developing in the global world had placed the country many steps behind the rest of the world. Unfortunately, this was the price that Iraq had to pay. In 2003, Iraq was thrust into the world of globalization. For Iraq, globalization meant rapid, unforeseeable change in almost every aspect of life including in intercultural business communication.

Chaney and Martin (2011) say that intercultural business communication is a business environment involving a diversity of cultures. Hence, the location which this research is attempting to target fits this description.. In fact, Iraq suffered years of sanctions, leading to isolation from global approaches to language learning, politics, and economy. However, after 2003 Iraq was wide open to various changes, one of which was new approaches to language learning. As the increase of business started to develop both locally and internationally, the need for understanding and learning English as a globalization language was also increasing.

Obviously, many case studies have been done in parts of this world where business opportunities are expanding and growing; an example for such development in both business and language is Asia. Nevertheless, other parts of the globe have also increased in need for business English. This research shows one sample of the developing need for the English language in general and business English teaching in specific.

Iraq's vast changes had outcomes that could be barriers to development in general. ROO is still facing challenge to overcome the language barriers to meet BP's expectations regarding its place on the map in the business world. To acquire or learn any language there are certain barriers of communication that need to be specified. Barriers in general vary from one situation to another considering culture and behavior. Chaney and Martin (2011) identify the following barriers:

- Physical- time, environment, comfort and needs, and physical medium (e.g., telephone or letter).
- Perceptual- viewing what is said from your own mindset.
- Motivational- the listener's mental inertia.
- Experiential- lack of similar life happenings.
- Emotional- personal feelings of the listener.
- Linguistic- different languages spoken by the speaker and listener or use of vocabulary beyond the comprehension of the listener.
- Nonverbal- nonword messages.
- Competition- the listener's ability to do other things besides hear the communication.

These barriers affect how English language learning and teaching function at most business environments in Iraq. For example, the linguistic barrier could be looked upon in this research as the long years when Iraq was cut off from the use of English, which paralyzed people's ability to improve and interact. The minority that had acquired English from the late 1960's and 1970's were fortunate to have the experience of learning the language from working with companies or having the freedom to travel. However, the

generations that came after did not have these privileges. In the 1990's students depended on school teaching that was taught for means of passing the test and not for use of communication. After the long years of isolation, 2003 came with a change in all areas of life. While the majority of governmental institutions were working in the state of mind from 1972, regardless of the rapid changes the mind-set of 1972 still in need to catch up to 2012 mind-set of the business world. The level of improvement is slowly developing and it could be better, especially the situation in Basra.

The need for English language in general and Business English in particular came as a result of years of sanctions. The most problematic issue that the companies faced in 2003 was the ability to communicate in a global world. The most concerning was that although the majority of employees had years of experience within their field of work, for example, drilling wells, human resources, and in purchasing departments, they did not know how to transfer this experience to work within the new form of business. This was the gap that was in need of serious attention and discussion. The intention of this study is to highlight the needs for such specific cases that are occurring throughout Iraq's business development and the importance to develop a fundamental foundation of the English language.

Despite the increasing need for general English courses in the oil industry, the most important factor holding back progress has been the lack of courses for English for Specific Purposes (ESP). This brings us to an important point where we should signify the importance of ESL. Strevens (1988) claimed ESL as "being focused on the learner's need, waste no time, is relevant to the learner, is successful in imparting learning, is more cost-effective than general English" (as cited Johns & Dudley-Evans, 1991, p. 298).

Summary

Although NA has not changed greatly throughout the past two decades, the case studies and research done show that most approaches now examine NA from using multiple sources of data and the views of multiple stakeholders, with the most effective approaches reflecting the perspective of learners, teachers, and work place demands.

CHAPTER 3 – METHODOLOGY

Methods

Introduction

This study analyzes the needs for English language training for employees at the BP oil company in Rumaila, Iraq. Because English language skills are an important way for employees to enhance their level of performance at this company, the quality of the courses organized by the company's administration is an important issue. The analysis looks at the courses because they demonstrate various difficulties. My goal is to explain these difficulties and suggest recommendations. This chapter explains how data regarding the current courses was collected and analyzed as well as describing the study's participants.

The choice of using BP occurred because BP is now in charge of many local Iraqi employees that have transferred from the SOC government oil company to BP. Because BP is an international corporation based in the United Kingdom, the language of business for all employees is now English. For this reason, the quality of English training for local employees is critical to success of the company and advancement for the employees.

My decision to choose this particular company was based on two factors: a personal one and a general one. Personally, I have worked with the company's English training courses for more than eight years and have taught many of these courses. My graduate studies have given me the opportunity to connect theory to practice through examining how well the courses reflect English for Specific Purposes principles. Generally, my choice of BP was related to the consent of the BP administration to conduct the research. They were willing to provide access to participants, without the

necessity of site visits to the company. Their cooperation made it possible to conduct the survey.

Participants

Three groups of participants were included in the study: Employees, teachers and administrators. The total number of participants finishing all portions of the data collection was 38. The participants ranged in age from 25-50. Each of the groups will be explained in turn.

Employees

The employees were the largest group. They are all local Iraqi employees that had transferred from the original State Oil Company (SOC) to BP to work as part of a 20-year contract agreement. This group was selected for the study with no specifications for age, gender, or level of English, but they had to have taken English courses at the company. Although I attempted to survey 75 employees, only 33 responded and completed the survey. The participants included 30 males and 3 females. The only conditions regarding their participation for the survey were that they were Iraqi employees working at the Rumaila oil field, and that they had attended or are attending English courses there. This group is referred to as the “students” in the rest of the study.

Teachers

The second group, the teachers, included three participants. All had participated in teaching the students at the ROO. Two teachers were from the British Council; the other was an Iraqi teacher that with a good English background in English teaching. It is worth mentioning that some of teachers work by a yearly contract, so they are not fixed employees at the ROO. Teachers were contacted through e-mail. In addition to completing a survey, teachers were also interviewed through Skype. The intention was to have more than 3 participants but only these teachers responded to the survey.

Administrators

The administrators were the international staff for BP. Although there were a number of staff that could be linked to this group, the most suitable candidates for this group were the managers that operate the courses at the actual compound in Rumaila. Two participants took part in this survey.

Data Collection

The data were collected using a triangulated procedure using the responses of administrators, students, and teachers (Bremner, 2010, Switzer 2006). Triangulation is a quantitative method used for gathering data from various sources; however, it is mostly used by triangulation of the tools used to collect the data. In this particular research the triangulation is used with the participants of students, teachers, and administration. The data collection used online surveys and informal interviews, using Skype as the interview tool. The student, teacher, and administrator surveys took place in spring of 2012. The online questionnaires provided quantitative results that were compared with qualitative

data from the interviews (also conducted in spring of 2012). Interviews were done with a sample of participants from each of the three groups in order to give me more insight to each group's views of the difficulties they faced. The interview questions asked about the difficulties and how they would improve future courses. A summary of the participants and data collected is shown in Table 1.

Table 1

The number of participants that participated in the online survey and interview for the students, teachers, and administration.

Groups	Number of participants	Data Collected	
		Online Survey	Interview
Students	33	33	1
Teachers	3	3	2
Administration	2	2	1

Instruments

Online Survey

The online survey used for this research consisted of three questionnaires, one for each of the three groups. Only the student group included a personal information section, asking about gender, age, and specific field of work, as shown in Figure 3. The full survey is provided in Appendix A. The student survey is the only one translated to Arabic, as shown in Figure 4, because the English level of the students varied from beginner to intermediate. As for the teachers and administrators, their surveys asked for no personal information, because they were fewer in number. To ensure minimum risk for all groups, personal information was, to the greatest extent possible, non-identifying. (A report of the

results is to be shared with BP) Detailed information of each survey for the groups is explained in the task description.

Employee/ Student Survey

General Information/ معلومات عامة

*** 4. Specify your field of work? / ما هو حقل عملك؟**

Yes نعم

Engineer - مهندس	<input type="radio"/>
Human Resources - الموارد البشرية	<input type="radio"/>
Administration - الإدارة	<input type="radio"/>
Other - أخرى	<input type="radio"/>

Other (please specify)

Prev Next

Powered by **SurveyMonkey**
Create your own [free online survey](#) now!

Figure 3. Screenshot of the personal information section of the online survey.

Description of Survey

All three surveys were similar in form. However, they differed in the type of questions asked. A detailed consent page of the aim and risks formed the beginning of all three surveys, (Appendix C). Further information is explained about the content of each questionnaire.

The survey questions used for the student group consisted of two parts. Part A asked about general information and Part B asked ten multiple-choice questions. The teacher survey asked for no general information and used nine multiple-choice questions allowing for optional comments on each question. The administrator's survey also asked

no general information and contained nine multiple-choice questions with optional comment for each question. Participants did not receive any benefits by performing this task and they could refuse to participate. Average time for completing the survey was approximately 5 minutes.

Employee/ Student Survey

أسئلة المصحح / Survey Questions

*** 5. Choose "yes" or "no" for the following questions./ اختر نعم أو كلا**

	Yes نعم	No كلا
Have you enrolled in other English courses before? هل سجلت في دورسات انكليزي من قبل؟	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Have you had the opportunity to travel to another country? هل منحت الفرصة لك للسفر الاقطار اخرى؟	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Did you use your English when travelling? هل استخدمت اللغة الانكليزية أثناء سفرك؟	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Prev Next

Figure 4. The online survey for employees/students, multiple-choice questions in both English and Arabic.

Interviews

Informal interviews were used as a second form of data. The interviews included one student, two teachers, and one administrator. Interviews were audio recorded. No personal information was recorded, only signifying to which group the interviewee belonged. The interview included six questions; some of the questions were shared between the three groups (Appendix B).

CHAPTER 4 – RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results and Discussion

Research Questions

This chapter will address each of the research questions through data collected from the questionnaires and the informal interviews. The research questions for this case study are reproduced below.

1. Are the courses meeting the students' needs? What are their needs?
2. What are the administration's obstacles and challenges in this particular situation?
3. Are the teachers' needs being addressed? What are these needs?

Results and Discussion of Research Question One

The first question is divided into two parts. The first part evaluates the English courses by asking the students their opinion towards the courses they have previously attended. The second part of the question concerns the students' perceived needs, which I will elaborate on later. The first part of question one states: Are the current courses meeting the students' needs?

Data was gathered through the students' surveys. In addition, information from the teacher and administrator questionnaires were used to help answer this question. The questions asked are subdivided in the presentation of the results. The first three questions asked about English study during their work history. Each was asked in a *yes* and *no* format (Table 2).

A high percentage of the students replied *yes* on these questions, suggesting that they had strong interest not only in studying English but in studying English abroad. For

the first question, 22 (71%) of the students had enrolled in other English language courses. In question two, 21 (70%) of the students had had the opportunity to exercise their language abroad and 23 (79%) of the students had exercised conversational English in travel situations. All the results, when compared to the situation before 2003 in Iraq, reflected an increase in travel opportunities, which opened the doors for interaction with foreigners and the opportunity to develop communicative skills. This development also created the need for well-structured business English courses for the staff. For example, the interview with the manager of the training program stated that “*staff always say to me, you’ve got to send us to the UK,*” explaining that the majority of the local employees working with them have a preconceived idea that for them to learn English they need to travel abroad. Figure 5 clearly shows the relationship between traveling and learning English. This perceived need to travel abroad to learn English is drawn from the belief that learning a second language would be better by practicing it within the environment of the targeted language. However, in this particular case travel could be linked to the very limited traveling opportunities before 2003, so students are eager to see the world and escape for some time from the environment they have had to live within.

Table 2

Questions 1-3, number of participants, and the students’ answers for the online survey.

Item	Questions Group 1	Yes	No
Q1	Have you enrolled in other English courses before? (n = 31)	22	9
Q2	Have you had the opportunity to travel another country? (n = 30)	21	9
Q3	Did you use your English when travelling? (n = 29)	23	6

The second group of questions consisted of four multiple choice questions (Table 3). Question four shows 19 (61.3%) of the students agree that the English courses they have attended have had a positive affect on their work performance. This suggests that the courses delivered to the students did affect their performance level. Surprisingly, question six shows 15 (48.4%) of the students did not approve of the materials used to deliver the courses, and question seven shows 17 (54.8%) of the student state that the courses did not meet their expectations. This contrasts with question four, which showed approval of the courses and their effect on improving the students' performance.

Table 3

Questions 4-7, number of participants, and the students' answers for the online survey.

Item	Questions Group 2	Yes	No	May be	Don't know
Q4	Do you feel that the English courses you are taking or have taken have had a positive effect on your work performance? (n = 31)	19	4	7	1
Q5	Do you feel that an intensive short term course serves your needs better than a longer course? (n = 31)	8	16	6	1
Q6	Do you feel that course books or materials you were offered are sufficient and serve your needs in regards to improving your English language? (n =31)	7	15	6	3
Q7	Have the course (s) you attended met your expectations? (n = 31)	5	17	5	4

However, there was less approval of the materials used and expectations of the courses. Although the students could be emphasizing that the courses changed their performance at work and had good results, their expectations of learning English and

being able to perform on a higher level of English were more than they could actually accomplish in a limited time. This is due to the business environment where much is expected from the employees, resulting in anxiety from the expectations of what they are able to accomplish. As for the materials used, one teacher agreed that the materials *may be* sufficient allowing for some probability that they are not to the degree that serve the purpose of this environment. This suggests that curricula and materials should be given great attention as they are designed to meet the goals and needs of the students, by concentrating on themes and skills (Boyd, 2002, p. 48). It has been mentioned that these students come from a wide range of departments and various specializations. Designing curricula that address each department and its specific needs by gathering information from both head departments and student focus groups could be an effective way to meet student needs (Forey, 2004).

Finally, question five shows that 15 (51.6%) of the students preferred longer courses to shorter courses. My personal experience of teaching a three-month course for employees is that in some cases employees prefer the longer courses as they allow them time to practice their English skills and feel more comfortable. This in some cases has better results than short term courses. It may be that long-term courses are more effective for beginner and elementary level student than for more advanced students. Intensive short term courses could be presented to intermediate and pre-intermediate levels focusing on certain skills, such as courses focused on meetings and negotiations. One of the teachers commented, “short courses are often effective for targeted and specific training purposes but for more general development such as language training longer courses may be more appropriate.”

Figure 5 shows the three groups' responses to question eight, "In your opinion, how well do you think the courses prepared the students for their work environment?" This asked about the level of preparation the courses that were delivered to the students. The teachers' group believed the level was *very good*, while the administrators' opinions ranged between *good* and *not so good*. This suggests a divide between the teachers (on short-term contracts) and the administrators, who had been involved over the two years of the program. The administrators also sought to meet the students' requirements by planning new course options for the students. These strategies and options of courses will be covered and discussed more clearly in the second research question, which gives detailed information of the administrators' perspective, goals, and the obstacles they face.

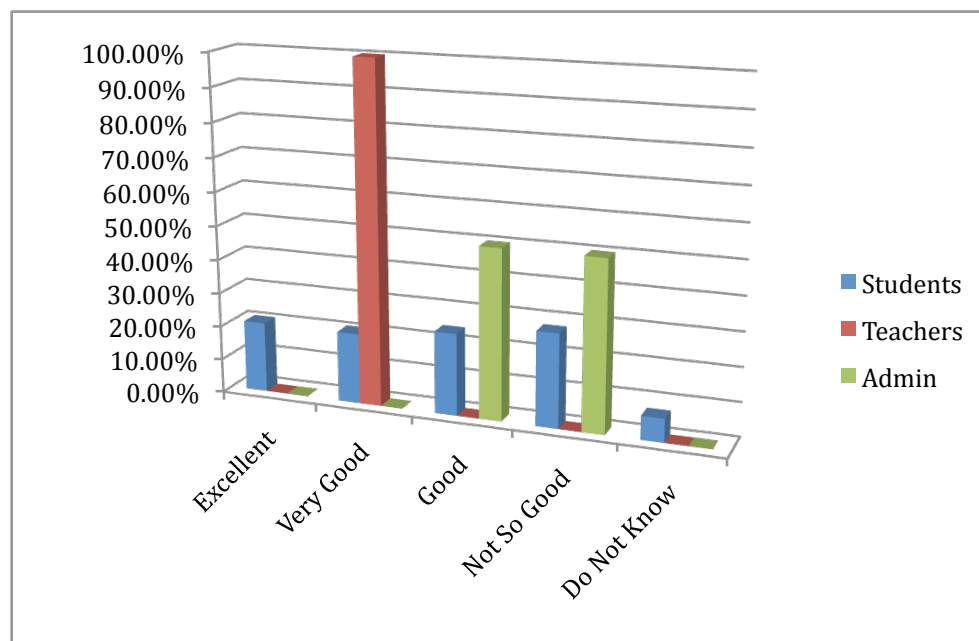


Figure 5. *How students, teachers, and administrators thought the courses prepared the students.*

The second part of the first research question deals with the learners' needs. This part of the results and discussion focuses on the online survey responses and interviews of all three groups of students, teachers and administration in comparison with each other. Survey question nine asked, "Which form of English are the students in need of most to prepare them for performing their job more efficiently?"

Figure 6 shows the three groups agree that conversation was the most important skill needed to enable students in this business environment to use their English confidently. One of the teachers commented that "they have the vocabulary but not confidence to use it." On the other hand, a student argued that,

*This is what am trying to stress on, the conversation is the best way to get acquainted to the **other side**, you know, you have to open up a conversation with the international employer that we have now in Iraq, so if you can't speak with anyone you'll never get anything, you know, this is the problem.*

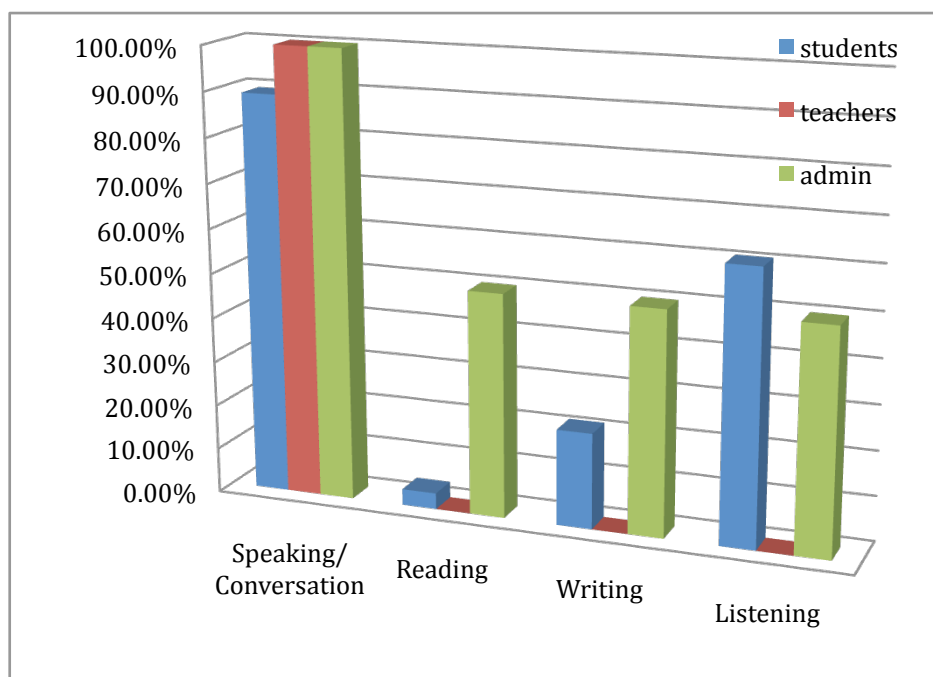


Figure 6. The results of questions nine, which asks what form of English helps the students perform their job more effectively.

This argument refers to the reasons listed in the introduction, which outlined the lack of English at the work place before 2003, lack of interaction with international staff, and the educational system that did not emphasize conversational skills. These contributed to the students' hesitation in their use of English. In the above statement, the student used the phrase "the other side", expressing that the foreigners were "the other side", suggesting that the situation now for these employees is to gain practical language skills and communication skills. Without these skills they are not able to obtain a better position or in most cases, any job at these international companies. This is seen as new territory for Iraq in general and for Basra in particular, as it has been decades since any foreigner entered and worked with Iraqi people. Gradual development to expand these opportunities is in progress but it is very slow, mostly related to the security issues and lack of stability.

The same student commented that, “In Iraq we don’t have a certain curriculum you know, what we get from the elementary school is just letters and simple words.” Here the student is criticizing the Iraqi educational system as an important factor that plays into what is happening after graduation from college (Kassim and Ali, 2010). This reality of the business environment is challenging for those who do not have the ability to communicate in English. The student elaborates why conversation is a *must* for Iraqi students and serious attention should be given to address this need claiming that,

“When it comes to a face to face conversation you will see a lot of lagging in this issue, they don’t have the courage to face someone and speak in English.”

Also the administration group commented on this issue saying that,

“Confidence to speak is a major problem. Staff are generally able to listen & understand much better than they can speak.”

Breakdowns in communication (Storch, 2002), hesitancy in speaking, and the inability to express thoughts and ideas all confirm that the students struggle to conduct a conversation in English. From my own teaching experience I have noticed that students have the vocabulary and grammar, but they often lack confidence to produce the language. To tackle this issue, teachers need to empower students and focus on capacity building. Role play is a good approach to use especially in business environments, as it sets students in an authentic setting, gives them the chance to practice their English without being hesitant, skills they can implement in similar real life situations on the job.

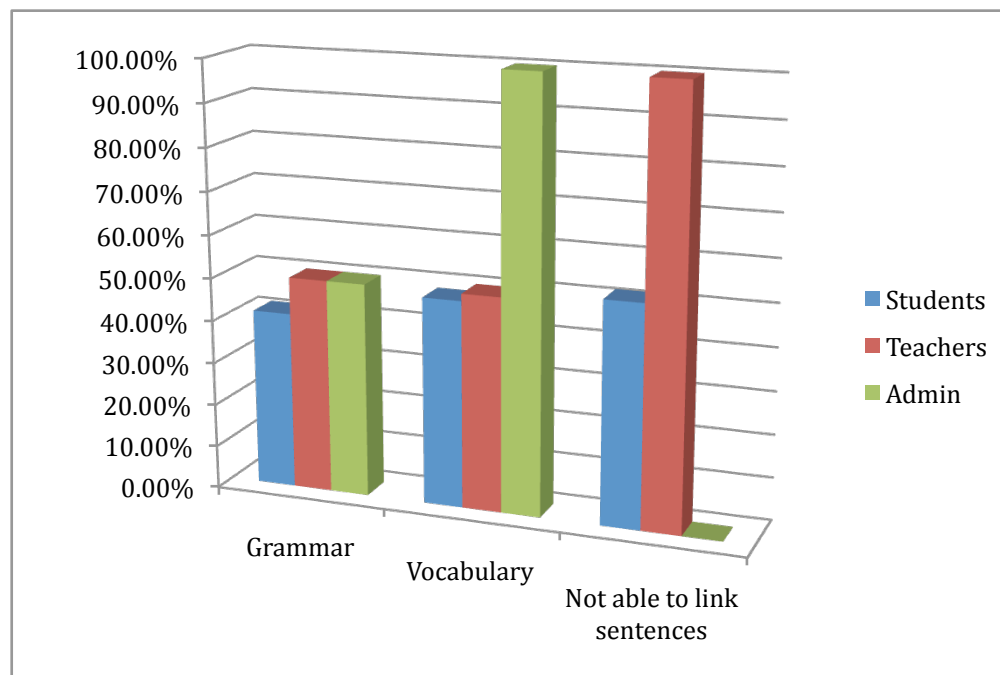


Figure 7. *The most problematic issues in grammar, vocabulary, or inability to link sentences that the students acquire when attempting to speak English.*

The final question in the survey highlights which forms of English are problematic for students when speaking English, giving a multiple choice of grammar, vocabulary, and inability to link sentences. The first and second choices in this question are general while the third choice is more specific, directed to the difficulties in communicating in a second language. This is very common for this targeted group, as their hesitation and the idea of not sounding right, or problems with placing tenses in the correct form, all come together in not able to link sentences. Figure 7 shows 15 of 29 that answered this question emphasized their inability to link sentences. This total is supported by the results of Figure 8, which also reflects conversation as the most needed

form of English. Linking sentences is related to conversational skills. An international teacher said that;

“The majority of the students there were a quite consistent level, of what we will call an elementary kind of level where they’ve got a bit ... the basics but they need quite a lot more”

The local teacher commented on the student’s levels claiming that,

“We’re teaching beginners and elementary and we rarely do the pre-intermediate and intermediate because most of the Iraqi people are in the range of starter, beginner, and elementary”.

These claims show a broader view of the students’ levels, which helps us to understand their needs. These are students who have the basics of English but still need to build on these basics to develop their English at this oil company.

Vocabulary is a second concern, as vocabulary is a struggle even for those students that have good speaking skills because each department and specialized field has its own key vocabulary. One interviewed student emphasized that he is *“facing terminological problems”* saying that although he has good experience in English and his conversational skills are good, he still needs to adapt to the terminology of his profession. Working as a contract administrator, he explains that he has difficulties in understanding the new terms. He provides an example of “proviso terms” that he deals with in his daily work. This adds another challenge for these students to deal with while they are trying to adapt to the new system of this company. The teachers also expressed their opinions regarding vocabulary acquisition, as the international teacher explained that “we had

quite a lot of material that we would use for technical engineering oil industry based vocabulary and phrases, a lot of departments wanted that.” The problem of actually using the set of new vocabulary within the correct context remained. The use of “word partnership” and building diagrams could be a good method to approach this problem (Andon and O’Riordan, 2002, p. 33).

The final problematic form, grammar, was identified by 12 (41.4%) students as a concern when speaking English. Both teachers and administrators also identified grammar as problematic. One teacher explained that *imperatives* were integrated within the courses of the technical departments, such as engineering and drilling. These departments needed this type of grammar to be able to describe things simply and quickly. Grammar as the last problematic issue for the students is related to the fact that throughout high school, extreme attention is given to grammar. A high percentage of employees would have learned rules “by heart,” but the problem again is applying what was learned in the class to actual production and practice.

Results and Discussion of Research Question Two

The interviews provided qualitative feedback and clarified the survey results. Six interview questions were asked of the manager of the training program. Firstly, the interview began by giving an average number of their participants that have attended English courses. The second and third questions of the interview focused on the type of obstacles the administration encountered from 2010 to 2012. Question four focused on the future goals of the English training program. Question five asked if the courses provided follow-up training. Finally, the interview ended by asking for suggestions for future courses at ROO. The manager replied to each of these questions.

1. How many employees on average have attended your courses?

The manger began to explain that it had been approximately two years since they launched the English training courses for the ROO employees and about 1500-2000 employees had attended English courses from a combination of short and longer duration courses in Basra and abroad.

2. What were the obstacles to holding the course at the beginning?

The manger classified the obstacles into three main periods: earlier, later, and ongoing obstacles. The earlier obstacles were those experienced at the beginning (2010) of the training program, the later obstacles were experienced half way through the program and the ongoing are obstacles that are still in need of attention and resolution. Following is a detailed description of what the ROO training program has faced and is still facing in regards to these obstacles.

Earlier Obstacles (2010)

The ROO training program was faced with three main obstacles in its early stages. Quality of teaching was the first obstacle. After the contract was signed between SOC and BP, the task of training employees and assessing them to work with in an international oil company meant using English on a daily basis at work. Daily use of e-mail and direct interaction with international staff was targeted because of the managerial responsibility of coordinating the local employees to understand the new work systems. Because this is a business environment and not an educational environment, having quality teachers deliver English courses in that period of time in Basra was challenging enough. This was highlighted by security issues and the time needed to certify teachers

to get in to Iraq. All these factors contributed to delaying the training courses for some time. In addition, local teachers of English were probably not a good option at that time. The word “quality” was highlighted within the interview, yet the local teachers that had ESP teaching experience were rare. As I have mentioned, SOC only started to recruit their own employees to attend teacher training programs that began in 2006 in the UK. But there was no coordination between BP and SOC training centers to work together on a combined training program, so BP developed its own training. The second obstacle was the British Council contract, as these were the qualified teachers that would deliver the English courses before some of the students would be sent for more training abroad. However, there were only two teachers and their contract was for one year; during 2012 the training center signed a new contract with a company that deals with English teaching courses and is part of the new accessible future goals of this program that I will explain later. The teachers and manager in the interviews also mentioned lack of facilities. They explained that they faced problems for providing classes to actually deliver the courses at the very beginning.

Later Obstacles (2011)

Prioritization of training was a later obstacle that the training program faced. The challenge to prioritize English training among other priorities of the students’ daily busy schedules between meetings and paper work was especially difficult. Again it is important to state that this is an oil industry and not an educational institution.

Remaining obstacles (2012)?

Three main points highlighted the ongoing obstacles: A common desire to attend six-month courses abroad, a goal of engaging employees in in-country courses in Basra, and a need for ongoing prioritization.

A brief explanation of the ongoing obstacles was discussed with the manger as one of the first problems they are facing, as the manger stated:

The one thing that all staff would like to do, is to be sent to the UK for a six months English language training, that's a common desire, if you like, among staff, less implying to want to go English language training in Basra, so that gives us a bit of a challenge.

Clearly, this is a challenge to overcome, as it fits my own experience. Most employees would rather travel abroad to attend courses than do so where they work. All employees were eager to travel, because traveling in the past had been a privilege that not all local and common Iraqis could do. It is till now to some extent not a fully resolved problem as gaining a visa to travel to the US or UK is difficult if not impossible. Therefore, the less difficult solution is to travel through companies and organizations. This could be why the majority of employees would want to attend courses abroad. The second challenge is actually the result of the first. In the sense, the program needed to find ways to engage and motivate the employees into attending courses in country. Sending all employees to attend courses abroad would be somewhat impractical and extremely expensive for the company, as was clarified by the manger.

3. What are your goals for future courses?

Future goals for the training program were also discussed. It was stated that this year's main goal was to make the training program more accessible for their students. The last two years' options for attending English courses for the employees were limited to two or three locations, none of which were in the center of Basra, but rather outside Basra city limits. By considering a variety of location of courses, holding courses in Basra allowed employees more options and motivation to attend courses. This solution addressed students' needs by making the courses more accessible and convenient.

4. Do you provide follow-up opportunities after participants graduate from the English course?

One response to this question was "not so far." The manager explained that this is an important question and highlighted a gap in the ROO training program. The manager was very frank by identifying this as a gap, because presenting English courses both long and short term in this situation does not solve the lack of English this business environment is facing. Follow up courses maintain the level of the employees and help them develop and expand their language. Typically, once the majority of students attend an English course, they get distracted with their work priorities. This results in either forgetting the information they had or staying at the same level because no development and self-autonomy learning is introduced (Holec, 1979). I will be offering suggestions later on for this gap in the recommendations part of the paper.

5. What would you suggest for future courses?

One manager explained what the training program is planning for future courses. A pragmatically designed program that touches upon realistic skills for the students is the inspiration for the future goals. In addition, linking training courses with rewards was suggested. Also, much attention is being given to provide training courses abroad by expanding the number of employees and working on approving visas to the UK and Amman. Significantly, the training program has been running for almost two years, which has given the administration time to understand their students.

Results and Discussion of Research Question Three

The third research question asked, “are the teachers’ needs being addressed?” What are these needs?” Two teachers emphasized the fact that the program lacked facilitation, such as providing classrooms for the courses. The facilitation of classes and locations has been resolved according to the manager’s claims in the interview.

Both teachers emphasized the need to provide courses for training local Iraqi teachers. Both the international teacher and local teacher expressed a definite need of providing development courses for the teachers that teach language courses in BP. It is essential for the teacher to attend courses that allows them the opportunity to add new ideas and update their pedagogical skills. The *need* for local teachers is increasing, which expresses a large gap for ESL teachers in Iraq and a demand to be filled. An international teacher pointed out that most local SOC teachers are eager to apply for the Certificate in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (CELTA), which is a sign of progress and motivation for acquiring professional teaching experience. More of these training

courses should be taking place within the oil industry. Although these oil companies prioritize business as their first goal, the new business environment has caused an interest in assessing their employees performance skills.

Teacher challenges - Both local and international teachers point of view

The interviews were set with a local Iraqi teacher and international teacher. This strategy allowed me to present both different and similar points of view of both teachers. The international teacher divided the challenges into two main areas:

1. Environmental challenges and security issues.
2. Class room challenges: phone calls, logistical problems, working hours of the day trying to separate from the work environment.

The international teacher stated that both are connected:

“If you can’t get a taste or understanding of what their daily life is like then it’s a lot more difficult to provide, you know, the living environment all we could do is speak to them in the slightly artificial environment”.

Of course, the situation in Basra is not yet stable or safe for foreigners, even though they were permitted to be transferred from the airport to the ROO campus. This was not normal life for the teachers as the only contact with the true culture of this city and its people was at work, which was termed artificial.

The Iraqi teacher explained the changes as mostly facilitation and lack of coordination regarding classes place and time. However, because this was a local teacher the environmental aspect did not reflect a challenge as the teacher lived in Basra and was

well accommodated to the environment and had a better sense of social and cultural aspects of the community.

The use of technology and teaching was also addressed. Both teachers were asked if they used technology in their courses and to give an example of the type of technology they bring in to the class. Only one of the teachers replied yes and gave an example of the record player or computer. However, the second teacher didn't use any technology, explaining that it was not necessary for the type of class taught at the time. As for the students' interview question, "Is there any technology used in your courses? If yes what do you think of it?". The student explained that he did take courses where the teachers used technology and he expressed that it makes the class for him more motivating, because he has an interest in technology, so combining both language use and technology is a good motivation for him to learn language. Integrating technology with language learning in this business environment would upgrade the level of employee language, but also work performance (Kern, 2006).

In summary, the results show of the challenges, problems, and needs for students, teachers, and administration. Each group elaborated on its own obstacles. But what could be drawn from these results and highlighted is that the three groups confirmed the need for conversational skills. It is a critical need highlighted in the results by the word *hesitancy*. This emphasizes language is not just related to grammar, vocabulary, and speech. One important factor that binds everything together is confidence. To allow confidence to take its place, the focus should be towards empowering students to the stage where they can engage confidently into a conversation or discussion at work.

CHAPTER 5 - CONCLUSION

Conclusion

Since 2003, Iraq has witnessed tremendous changes in daily life, in government and in business. This paper addresses one aspect of change in Iraq, which concerns the oil industry and its critical need for English language training. Because of the importance of this industry for future stability, governance, investments and business, this study indicates that great attention should be given to developing English instruction that effectively serves the purposes of the oil business workplace.

The main aim of the research was to look into the employees' needs at BP, a major player in the modernization of Iraq's oil industry. The analysis for this study depended on three groups of subjects: students, teachers, and the administrators at BP. The results demonstrate that the local Iraqi students have a vital need for conversational skills in comparison to all the other skills. Because of this, BP's administration is eager to fulfill other needs that were highlighted by the students such as more opportunities to attend English courses in the UK and is also offering multiple choices for attending courses in Basra that cover a full day course schedule or work place courses conducted during business hours.

A critical issue emphasized by both teachers and students was the *hesitancy* that occurred when students attempted to speak. Students found it quite problematic to break through this hesitancy and practice English. This hesitancy comes from not wanting to make mistakes. Because of the sudden wave of international interaction following regime change, this new English environment is overwhelming and puzzling to the majority of Iraqi employees, especially because of the variety of English dialects being spoken. For example, the international BP employees come from different places in the

UK, and they reflect this in the diversity in their accents. This requires the local employees to focus on adjusting to all accents, which adds additional stress to their English and their ability to conduct conversations with international staff members. This gap prevents local employees from understanding and even being understood on a daily basis, which affects the work environment and causes hesitancy and frustration.

In discussing the students' needs, international teachers made clear that they were not acquainted with the environment, social norms, religion, and politics of this country. Thus, they did not have a clear perspective of the students and could not get an accurate feeling of the surroundings and daily lives of Iraqis because of the security issues that are a great concern for any foreigner in Iraq. This limited their mobility and ability to understand their students. Iraq over this period differs from other Arab counties that do not have these concerns.

ESP was highlighted throughout the paper for their important role in the business climate in today's Iraq, due to the increasing need for English. Although the roots of the language training problem could be related back to the educational system, this paper is more concerned with the situation at BP and how BP helps its employees develop their English language in order to serve their work place needs. The study concludes that there must be a well-developed program for years to come. Although there are still unsolved issues in the development of such a program, there are two main focus points that the program needs to attend to right now. The first is to play a positive role in raising the awareness of local teachers of the crucial need of ESP by giving opportunities to Iraqi teachers to take part in further training. The second is the need for follow up courses that

will continue to engage students in language learning and introduce them to research about autonomous learning.

Limitations

Data collection was limited to only the BP students that attended courses. It may be that the findings from this study will not generalize to other international oil companies in all particulars. Also, due to the difficulties in data collection, the case study was conducted online and no site visits were possible that could have enhanced the chances for greater participation. Iraq remains an unstable country, and the instability affected both participation in the study and the depth of the analysis possible.

In some cases site visits could have affected the data collection positively by increasing the participation for all three groups, resulting in higher count of participation. One problem with the survey was not all participants answered all questions. This occurred for both students and teachers. In addition, the level of English proficiency was not collected from the students' surveys, which could have shown if different levels require different recommendations.

The study also was limited in the demographic information collected. The students' basic information was limited for purpose of reducing the risk they might face if they were able to be identified. The survey was conducted online to prevent the distribution of hard copies being sent between the administration and the researcher, which would have increased the teachers' and students' risks. The teachers and administrators were not asked for any information.

Recommendations

The list of recommendations represent an inside perspective of how the courses could be developed in the ROO business situation. The recommendations are divided into 3 sections, training of trainers (TOT), innovative and communicative approaches, and foreign teacher orientation. Section two is subdivided into follow-up courses, introducing technology, and using role play. Each section and sub-section is discussed and clarified with references to the data results and literature review.

1) Training of trainers (TOT): Results of the survey from the third research question, “Are the teachers’ needs being addressed? What are these needs?” indicated a lack of training programs for local teachers. Jasso-Aguilar (1999) approached this by employing an insider/outsider perspective in analyzing this problem. Both teachers in the interview identified the lack and need for enhancing the local teachers for better English teaching skills. I as an insider recommend providing onsite opportunities for ESP teacher training. Onsite courses will increase the ESP proficiency levels of the local instructors, who face limited access to professional training. Bringing in ESP professionals to train BP employees onsite would be a vital component in achieving better local instruction.

2) Innovative and Communicative Approaches

2a- Follow up courses: The BP training program lacked follow-up courses to their basic courses, but these are essential in future English training. BP is planning to fill in this gap in the program, because it is important to maintain and increase the English proficiency of the students. This requires practice in order to aid in the sustainability of the language competency. It may be possible to employ

online lessons which could be designed to address certain skills and motivate students to continue to work on their language. The online courses could be designed to address more specific needs for the employees, such as writing reports, business e-mails, conducting meetings, presentations, and developing conversational skills. It is important to mention that the online courses could be implemented towards the learners' time schedule and convenience. This change is already being examined in some places. For example, Iowa State University's English department, where I attended my M.A course, is focused on innovating online teaching course and experimenting with new ideas towards online courses for English learners,

2b- Introducing technology and CALL to language teaching and learning:

Upgrading the training courses to include computer assisted language learning should be emphasized in the English training offered by BP. Flowerdew (2010) states that technology is becoming increasingly significant in language teaching, specifically the integration of computers in language classrooms. ROO is the most adequate environment to combine technology and language, as both are needed and used on a daily basis in ROO's operations. The results showed limited use of technology in the courses. Kern (2006) and Salminen (1996) both mention in that a wave of intergrating technology with language learning. In a business environment, language learning and technology are key components that will increase the level of both language and work place performance.

2c- Role play workshops: Results from both the administration's perspective and the teachers' viewpoint indicated the need for practical and authentic courses to improve English language skills. The teachers indicated that the students are in need of conversational skills. The student answers reflected the same need of conversational skills to reduce their hesitation and fear of communicating with the international staff and their managers. Celce-Murcia (2001) states that role play is an essential aspect of the communicative learning process. Allowing students more space to practice language with real life situation they would encounter on daily basis. Business meeting role play situations could give students the confidence to develop negotiation and business solution skills, which brings their experience of work to meet with their language ability. This enhances their work performance and builds their confidence to peruse better positions in the future.

3) Foreign teacher orientation: Foreign teachers are in need of orientation before teaching because they are restricted to living in compounds and have no interaction with the cultural, social, and environmental lives of their students. It is important to give foreign teachers a full view of the environment the students come from, enabling them to have a better scope and understanding of their students. The interview with the international teacher identified this as an obstacle that prevented the teachers from being acquainted to the social background of the students they were teaching, because the teachers had limited locations and could not have a full view of the social, religious, and cultural background of the Iraqis, probably the only source of information was what is reported by media. This is the result of the years of isolation in this country. The

literature review highlighted breakdown in communication that is referred to by Holliday (1995) and Lockwood (2012). Breakdown is not only concerned with student to student communication, but could also be considered with teacher to student. From the perspective of cultural awareness and understanding both cultures of the western and eastern world is a key for successful language teaching. I recommend teachers attend an orientation for which brings them a step further to understand this specific part of the world.

Implementations

To implement the changes recommended in this study, students' needs, objectives and requirements should be considered foremost. For international companies, it is important that workers from outside Iraq understand the cultural background of the employees as this does have an effect on their language teaching. In addition, the university system in Iraq is in critical need of renewal in order to be more open to educational advancements are abroad. Businesses do not exist in a vacuum and cannot in themselves create the conditions for better English learning.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A – ONLINE SURVEY QUESTIONS FOR STUDENTS, TEACHERS, AND ADMINISTRATION

Student Survey Questions

General Information.

1. State your gender

Male Female

2. Age

3. Specify your field of work

a. Engineer b. Human Resources. c. Administration. d. Other.

Survey Questions.

1- Have you enrolled in other English courses before?

Yes No

2- Do you feel that the English courses you are taking or have taken have had a positive effect on your work performance?

Yes No May be Don't know

3- When speaking English, what kind of problems do you have?

a. Grammar. b. Vocabulary c. not able to link sentences d. other

4- Have you had the opportunity to travel to another country?

Yes No

5- Did you use your English when travelling?

Yes No

6- What type of English form do you feel will help you do your job more effectively?

a. Speaking/ Conversation b. Reading c. Writing d. Listening

7- Do you feel that an intensive short term course serves your needs better than a longer course?

Yes No May be Don't know

8- How well do you feel the English courses prepared you for your work.

Excellent Very Good Good Not so good Don't Know

9- Have the course (s) you attended met your expectations?

Yes No May be Don't Know

10- Do you feel that the course books or materials you are were offered are sufficient and serve

your needs in regards to improving your English language?

Yes No May be Don't Know

Teacher Survey Questions

1. Is this your first teaching experience?

Yes No May be Don't Know

2. Do you feel that the English courses you are teaching have a positive effect on the employees work performance?

Yes No May be Don't know

Administration Survey Questions

1. Is this your first experience in such a position in the administration?

Yes No May be Don't Know

2. Do you feel that the English courses you are providing have a positive effect on the employees work performance?

Yes No May be Don't know

3. In your opinion where do you find the students have the most problematic issues in their English?

a. Grammar. b. Vocabulary c. not able to link sentences d. other

4. Have you as one of the administration staff attended courses or workshops that added to your experience recently?

Yes No

5. What type of English form do you feel these students are in need of more to help them perform their job more effectively?

a. Speaking/ Conversation b. Reading c. Writing d. Listening

6. Do you feel that an intensive short term course serves the student's needs better than a longer course?

Yes No May be Don't know

7. How well do you feel as an administrator these English courses prepared the students for their working position or situation?

Excellent Very Good Good not so good Don't Know

8. Do you feel that the courses have met your expectations as representatives or staff of the administration?

Yes No to some extent May be Don't Know

9. Do you feel that the course books or materials you are providing are sufficient and serve the student's needs to improving their English language?

Yes No May be Don't Know

APPENDIX B – INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR STUDENTS, TEACHERS, AND ADMINISTRATION

Questions for Administration

1. How many employees on average have attended your courses?
2. What were the obstacles to holding the course at the beginning?
3. What are the obstacles that you are still tackling?
4. What are your goals for the future courses?
5. Do you provide follow-up opportunities after participants graduate from the English course?
6. What would you suggest for future courses?

Questions for teachers

1. If you were designing a syllabus for an intensive course for the employees, what areas and topics would be useful for these students from your point of view?
Why?
2. Do you feel that the teachers need professional development courses?
3. What are the levels that you mostly teach?
4. What are the common obstacles that you face as a teacher?
5. Do you use technology in your courses? Give examples.
6. Do you have any suggestions for future courses?

Question for Student (employees)

1. What would you suggest for future courses?
2. What is your point of view regarding the courses you have attended?
3. What is your own plan or strategy for keeping or developing your English language after you accomplish your course?
4. Do you feel that you need a follow up course? Or what would you suggest after completing the Language course?
5. Is there any technology used in your courses? If yes what do you think of it?
6. Anything you would want to indicate on or highlight regarding the courses?

APPENDIX C – CONSENT FORM AND FORMAL EMAIL TO STUDENTS, TEACHERS, AND ADMINSTARYION

INFORMED CONSENT DOCUMENT

Title of the Study: The Situational Analysis of the Language Needs at the BP Language Center in Basra, Iraq.

Investigator: Lana Al Mudhaffar

This is a research study. Please take your time in deciding if you would like to participate. Please feel to ask questions at any time.

INTRODUCTION

The main purpose of the study is to learn about the English language needs of employees, teachers, and administration of the BP Company based in Basra, Iraq. The study focuses on enhancing employees' English language performance at this particular business environment.

DESCRIPTION OF PROCEDURES

When agreeing to participate in this study, you will be asked to complete an online survey about your attitudes towards the English language courses you are taking, participating in interviews. These interviews will be audio taped and used to record participation. The approximate time necessary to complete the online survey is 15-20 minutes. The audio interviews will be conducted upon a convenient schedule. Each interview will last less than an hour. Because this study will be conducted through online contacts no site visits are required.

RISKS

Attending language courses is part of your work as an employee at this particular company. However, this study might pose unusual risks for the participants. A report of all collected data will be compiled, and a summary report will be presented to the BP Company. The report will include a summary of results, findings, and suggestions for future courses.

BENEFITS

There is no direct benefit to you. However, it is hoped that this study will contribute to understanding the needs of learning English for this particular situation and for other similar situations.

COST AND COMPENSATION

You will not have any cost from participating in this study. You will not be compensated for participating in this study.

PARTICIPANT RIGHTS

Participating in this study is voluntary and you may refuse to participate in the study at any time. Deciding not to participate will not result in any penalty or loss of benefits that you feel entitled to. Also, it will not affect your position or relationship with the company's administration or human resources.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Records identifying participants will be kept confidential to the extent permitted by applicable laws and regulations and will not be made publicly available. However, federal government regulatory agencies, auditing departments of Iowa State University, and the Institutional Review Board (a committee that reviews and approves human subject research studies) may inspect and/or copy your records for quality assurance and data analysis. These records may contain private information.

To ensure confidentiality to the extent permitted by law, the following measures will be taken: all participants will be given pseudonyms. These pseudonyms will be attached to the data files and participants' actual names and identifiers will not be recorded. If the results are published, your identity will remain confidential. This consent form requests your permission to use audio for research analysis only.

QUESTIONS OR PROBLEMS

You are encouraged to ask questions at any time during this study.

- For further information about the study contact Lana Al Mudhaffar, lanasal@iastate.edu
- If you have any questions about the rights of research subjects or research-related injury, please contact the IRB Administrator, (515) 294-4566, IRB@iastate.edu, or Director, (515) 294-3115, Office for Responsible Research, Iowa State University, Ames, Iowa 50011.
- Supervisor, Dr. Levis jlevis@iastate.edu

**APPENDIX C – Consent form and formal email letters to students, teachers, and
administration.**

Dear All,

I am an M.A student and am conducting a survey of BP employees/teachers/administrators to collect data on your English courses that you have been involved with. The goal is to find out the impact of these courses on employees' work, how well the courses have developed employees' language skills, and how we can improve or enhance these courses for the future.

The goal of this research is to summarize the findings from the survey and interviews to determine how the needs for this workplace environment can be more effectively met.

This survey focuses on English courses; it should take about 10-15 minutes to complete. Although your participation is voluntary, your input is very important.

The survey link below is unique to you:

Thank you for taking your valuable time to participate in this important initiative.

Note: It is important to highlight that if you choose to participate in this online survey or interview please read the consent that will be on the first page of the survey. It is my duty to inform you that the results of this research will be shared in a summary report to the BP Company.

Sincerely

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